



# Women@Wavemaker Leadership Event

---

Be yourself, understand your weaknesses and  
don't take shit from anyone, advise panelists at  
Wavemaker's Women and Leadership Event



March 5th



This week saw Wavemaker host a panel looking at the subject of Women in Leadership Roles. The event was held on Tuesday 5 March, coinciding with the first anniversary of the creation of Women@Wavemaker, and kicked off a series of events to mark International Women's Day 2019 on Thursday 8 March.

Women@Wavemaker is a global Wavemaker initiative founded by Emily Fairhead-Keen, Group Strategy Director, Wavemaker UK and Camilla Bruggen, Joint Head of Data Insight, Wavemaker Global that champions gender equality in the agency's workplace.

With women from fields as diverse as magazine editing to software optimisation on the panel, there were a wide range of opinions on what women can bring to leadership roles – but also some common themes that emerged.

Kicking off the event, our own UK Managing Director, Candice Odhams, started by outlining four types of women leaders that have been identified, based on a book called *Secrets of Female CEOs*: female pioneers, feminine leaders, the integrated woman and women of inspiration. And although she noted that there is some truth to these archetypes, she turned the focus back to the individual.

‘We need to look at our own behaviour in the workplace,’ Candice said, questioning why so many women who see the 1950s housewife as a totally outdated stereotype find themselves behaving in selfless, approval-seeking ways in the workplace. ‘Step out, be selfish sometimes and take risks,’ Candice said, talking about how she challenged herself to look at how to identify the traits that were stopping her from progressing to a leadership role.

Terri White, Editor-in-Chief of Empire Magazine, also talked about challenging her weaknesses while believing in herself. ‘When I first became an editor, I noticed I had an instinct to step back and default to others,’ she said. ‘I had to force myself to lead from the front, to lead by example, not be afraid to be visible even if it’s because I have to make an unpopular decision.’

She made a similar point about realising she didn’t have to be uber-masculine, and that it wasn’t just OK to show softness and passion – it is actually a strength.

The panel also featured Katherine Alexander, Founder and CEO of Talent Investors and creator of the Best Bosses initiative, which has seen her interview dozens of people whose own employees have nominated them as being great to work for.

Katherine distilled her extensive research into what makes good leadership into three main qualities: trust, vulnerability and fairness.

‘Fairness is something we all talk about, it’s so fundamental. But the principle of fairness is undervalued in leadership,’ she said.

To illustrate its importance, Katherine used a quote from one of her interviewees: ‘No leader can always be nice. But you *can* guarantee fairness.’

Kate Waters, Director of Client Strategy & Planning at ITV, looked to her personal experiences when discussing leadership. She pointed out that some of the leaders she most admires, including her ITV boss Simon Dalgliesh, have qualities that she knows she can never emulate – such as being naturally outgoing, finding it easy to take risks and relishing conflict.

“Fake it until you feel it” is advice that never works for me – I go bright red,’ Kate said. ‘It’s exhausting to be something you’re not and you get found out eventually. What I figured out quite late in life was that if I was going to be a leader I needed to be myself and embrace authenticity.’

Not all the advice was about looking inwardly, however.



Suzy Dean, who is CEO of Addin365, a computing business she set up five years ago, wants us to also consider the societal issues that stop women from progressing in leadership – namely free or very low-cost childcare to help women back to work, more government support for maternity leave, more affordable housing, and the courage to call out that attitude that sees women still taking on the greater share of domestic duties.

‘We should challenge as a society, issues that would end gender imbalance,’ Suzy argued. ‘We need to start making more serious arguments for sisterhood.’

But there was a clear, unifying point that came out: being yourself is the only way forward.

Wavemaker UK MD Candice said: ‘There are lots of inspirational women to look to but only by understanding yourself and what’s holding you back can you become a great leader.’

ITV’s Kate Walters agreed: ‘Don’t do it my way or anyone else’s way but figure out who you are, what your strengths are, and play to them.’

‘Don’t change for anyone or any job – lean in to what makes you weird, your work persona should be as close to your real persona as possible,’ Terry White urged the audience,.

while Suzy Dean's advice was that the best way to get on in your career is to stick by your values.

“

**Living with your values makes it easier to live with yourself. Finally, don't take shit from anyone ever.”**

Excellent advice not just for women in leadership, but for any aspect of life.



**MORE INFORMATION:**

[Candice.Odhams@wavemakerglobal.com](mailto:Candice.Odhams@wavemakerglobal.com)



[www.wavemakerglobal.com](http://www.wavemakerglobal.com)

**WM**  
**WAVEMAKER**  
MEDIA. CONTENT. TECHNOLOGY.